

**REMARKS OF
INDIANA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE FRANK SULLIVAN, JR., AT THE
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE PUTNAM COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

Greencastle, Indiana
July 4, 2005

Today, on the anniversary of our nation's birth and at a point in history approaching our beloved state's bicentennial, we celebrate this magnificent courthouse's centennial. Yes, for 100 years this grand edifice has served our county, state, and nation; served it as the locus of the people's business, as a repository of our history, and as a symbol of our ideals and values.

For the invitation to reflect on these themes, I thank my friend, Judge Diana LaViolette. As the newspapers and news programs are fittingly filled this weekend with tributes to Justice Sandra Day O'Connor for her great contributions to our society as lawyer, judge, and woman, it is a propitious time for us here in Putnam County similarly to salute, for their great contributions as lawyers, judges, and women, Judge LaViolette and Judge Sally Gray.

To all of you Courthouse Centennial committee members and volunteers who have worked so hard to make today possible, my congratulations. To Judge Headley for his kind introduction, my thanks. And to my Statehouse colleagues and friends Representative Thomas and Senator Lawson, my judicial colleague and friend, Judge Lowe, Mayor Michael, and the other platform dignitaries, my greetings and best wishes. And I am pleased to see friends of long-standing in the audience, Tim Bookwalter, the Harmlesses, and the Stewarts.

As the citizens of Putnam County took their first steps into the 20th Century, a momentous decision faced them: to meet the need for more courthouse space, should they expand the half-century old building or demolish it in favor of a much larger new structure? Opinion was so divided that a county-wide referendum was held. The referendum confirmed, if nothing else, how closely opinion was divided: only 49 votes separated the two sides. Those favoring a new structure had prevailed – and thanks to strong project oversight, an accomplished architect, and an experienced builder, the decision turned out to be a good one: the new courthouse was completed and opened for business on this day 100 years ago – July 4, 1905.

They say that when the courthouse was dedicated 100 years ago today, 15,000 people crowded downtown to inspect the new "temple of justice." The newspaper said that a former United States Congressman delivered "a lengthy address." Judge Headley told me that I need not do the same! And I won't – there's a difference between people who serve in Indianapolis and those who serve in Washington, D.C., you know!

In the intervening century since 1905, the courthouse has been the locus for the people's business – sad business, routine business, joyful business. The sad: deaths recorded; divorces filed; person charged with crimes, including some horrendous crimes. The routine: property taxes paid; deeds recorded; voters registered; election returns tallied. The joyful: marriage licenses issued; births recorded; adoptions completed; and grand civic celebrations like this one.

Not only the locus for the people's business, though, the courthouse has also been a key repository of our history. Inside the courthouse, in the offices of the clerk and prosecutor and recorder and auditor and surveyor and treasurer, is the documentation for so much of what has happened here since Putnam County was organized in 1821. And outside are testaments to this county's most profound contributions to our nation and the world: the doughboy, commemorating those who served in World War I; the V-1 buzz bomb, paying tribute to those who helped vanquish Nazism and Japanese Imperialism; the stone obelisk, honoring those who served in the Korean and Vietnam Wars.

Not only a key repository of our history as well as the locus for the people's business, though, the courthouse also provides a symbol of our most cherished ideals and values.

Our courthouse is a symbol, first, of human ingenuity. The architect did not just give us a building. His grand design gives us inspiration to this day not just of the potential for our structures, not just of the potential for our designs, but of the potential – the nearly limitless potential – of the human mind to conjure and create. And one cannot reflect on human ingenuity in this city without saluting that world-famed center of learning and creativity several blocks from here, DePauw University.

Our courthouse is a symbol, second, of conserving natural resources. The builders of this courthouse extracted timber and stone from surrounding forests and quarries to frame, floor, and face the architect's design. Their work has endured into a new century. This enduring, not wasteful, use of natural materials emphasizes the value of conserving our natural resources, a value furthered locally along the Big Walnut and many other sites of natural beauty.

Our courthouse is a symbol, third, of the American commitment to defending peace and freedom throughout the world. The monuments of which I spoke a moment ago – doughboy, V-1, obelisk – evoke our common prayer for peace and freedom around the globe even as they commemorate in solemn silence those who have given their lives to those ends.

Our courthouse is a symbol, fourth, of electoral government. Born of narrow victory in a referendum, this courthouse which has kept the record of registered voters and kept the tallies of elections, also stands testament to our ideals of universal suffrage, secret ballot, and representative democracy.

Our courthouse is a symbol, fifth and lastly, of justice and the rule of law. Our

courts and judges are here; we are inspired by the stunning mural of Solomon in Judge Lowe's Circuit Courtroom. It is here that Hoosier citizens and institutions come to vindicate their legal rights and seek protection for their nearest and dearest interests. Our courthouse symbolizes, perhaps above all else, our absolutely unflinching and unfailing commitment to – as we sing in “America the Beautiful” – symbolizes our commitment to “confirm [America's] liberty in law.”

Yes, 100 years ago, our forebears began a new century. They did so not tentatively but boldly – by erecting a temple of justice as a locus for the people's business and by doing so created a repository for the coming century's history and a symbol of commitment to their cherished ideals and values.

Like our forebears, we too have begun a new century, indeed, not only a new century but a new millennium. Let us too do so boldly, by rededicating this magnificent structure to the people's business and rededicating ourselves to preserving our rich history and to pursuing the ideals and values of human ingenuity, of conserving our resources, of defending peace and freedom, of electoral government, and of justice and the rule of law.

Thank you very much.